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TRIBUTE TO DR. ELIOT

Memorial Words Incorporated in the Service of Feb. 23, 1958
at the First Unitarian Church, Niagara Falls, New York by
George N. Marshall, Minister

One week ago today Dr. Fredrick May Eliot, the distinguished President of the American Unitarian Association, preached at All Souls' Church, New York City, and returned to the church the following morning. Outside the church, he collapsed and died instantly. Dr. Eliot had served as President of the American Unitarian Association for over two decades with great dignity and effective leadership. He came from a family distinguished for Unitarian clergy and university presidents and his eminent accomplishments lived up to the family standard.

It is fitting and proper that as Unitarians we pause in this, our first Service since his death, to do honor and give thought to the significance of this, our chosen leader. No words of mine are adequate for this purpose. Rather, would I turn to his own words and read this passage:*

"Nobody knows what lies ahead for the world, or for America, or for any individual, in these coming twelve months. But what of that?....Indeed, the measure of our inability to foretell the coming events is precisely the measure of our faith. It may look as though many of our ideals would be vanquished, or betrayed by fate. Our dreams may turn out to be little better than sorry scarecrows. But the quality of faith is that it will ride straight ahead, indomitable still, with the echo of every brave and faithful horn still sounding in its breast.

And the same is true of the great uncertainty that awaits for each one of us beyond the experience we call death. Faith in the future does not mean knowledge here, any more than elsewhere. Faith in the future means courage, more than anything else - the courage which Barrie called "the lovely virtue", the courage that greets "the unseen with a cheer", that walks out into the darkest night with a quiet cheerfulness that transforms the face of the world until even the night is light about us. That sort of courage is the genuine faith in the future, and it is poles apart from the childish impulse to pretend that one knows what nobody can know, or accept as final the affirmations of some alleged authority which is no better than one's own fancy. That sort of courage faces a new year, or a new life, or a new day, with steady and smiling expectancy - prepared for any fate, with a heart for any fate.

Many times I have quoted Emerson: and even when there hasn't been direct quotation, there has very often been a strong reliance upon his thought. Let me close with a little poem of his which summarizes in unforgettable lines the faith in the future of a clear-eyed, straight-minded man who would scorn to deceive himself with childish imaginations but who would scorn yet more to face the future with fear or panic—"

"Every day brings a ship,
Every ship brings a word;
Well for those who have no fear,
Looking seaward well assured
That the word the vessel brings
Is the word they wish to hear."

So to this "clear-eyed, straight-minded man who would scorn to deceive himself with childish imaginations but who would scorn yet more to face the future with fear or panic" and who equated faith with courage, we say farewell, knowing that his spirit and the stamp of his person will live on in the Unitarian movement he brought to new heights.

* from his "UNITARIANS BELIEVE", page 55

REPORT ON THE ANNUAL MEETING:

New members elected to the Board of Trustees were Mrs. Douglas W. Aldrich, Donald S. Auman, and John Peterson.

The new Board met following the Meeting and organized, electing Dr. Homer L. Robson as President, Fred D. Powell as Vice President, Herbert A. Ridgway as Treasurer, and Miss Vera F. Baker as secretary.

The out-going president, Dr. William C. Gardiner continues on the Board of Trustees for another year. The 1925 AUA Building Note was burned.

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